

Thriller's slant unique; 'Harry Crumb' offensive

By Judith Trojan
NC News

NEW YORK — There have been more satisfying courtroom thrillers than "True Believer" (Columbia), but none with such an intriguing premise or intense protagonist.

Fiery lawyer Eddie Dodd (James Woods) makes cash the quick and conscience-free way: defending drug dealers. A one-time '60s idealist who grabbed headlines for powerfully defending noble causes, Eddie rationalizes his middle-aged cynicism and slimeball clients by pontificating about universal guilt and constitutional rights.

When his naive new law clerk, Roger Baron (Robert Downey Jr.), challenges him to clean up his act, Eddie reopens the case of a young underdog Korean, Shu Kai Kim (Yuji Okumoto), incarcerated eight years earlier for a Chinatown murder. Together, Eddie, Roger and quick-witted private investigator Kitty Greer (Margaret Colin) face off against such obstacles as a contingent of venomous neo-Nazis, murderous ex-cons, vindictive cops and a slick Manhattan district attorney (Kurtwood Smith) in order to pin the crime on the real culprit and free Kim.

"True Believer" is not so much an update on '60s radicalism or a study of racism's effect on our judicial system as it is an entertaining crime thriller with a unique slant.

Audiences will have to be on their toes to keep up with Eddie. He's a man with few restraints and a great deal of dangerous bravado. Not until the last third of the film,

when Eddie looks failure in the eye and deflates a bit, does the film get the breathing space needed to roll smoothly toward its exciting, unexpected denouement.

Due to some grisly violence, intense menace and rough language, the USCC classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

'Who's Harry Crumb?'

Tri-Star's latest outing, "Who's Harry Crumb?" is predominantly a vehicle for roly-poly "Second City TV" alumnus John Candy, who once again outshines his material as bumbling detective Harry Crumb.

A one-man wrecking crew, Crumb is the last and only dimwitted relation in a long line of supersleuth Crumbs. Called back from exile in the suburbs to the home office in Los Angeles to investigate the kidnapping of an heiress, Crumb is faced with several likely suspects, including his boss (Jeffrey Jones) and the heiress's philandering stepmother (Annie Potts).

Needless to say, director Paul Flaherty ("18 Again") has no mystery to deal with here. Most of the plot revolves around Crumb's fearless and broadly comic efforts to solve the case. While his disguises are riotous and his encouragement of the heiress's ugly duckling sister (Shawnee Smith) is a nice touch, the film has a field day with its larkish depiction of adultery. Murder and extramarital dalliances are especially acceptable if you marry an older man for money and find that he's about to empty his checkbook to pay ransom.



James Woods as a onetime '60s idealist lawyer named Eddie Dodd (left), Robert Downey Jr. as Roger Baron (center), and Yuji Okumoto as Shu Kai Kim (right) wait for a prison gate to open on the day Kim wins his freedom in "True Believer."

Due to its acceptance of adultery as an expedient way of life, several sexually suggestive encounters and some rough lan-

guage laced with sexual vulgarities, the USCC classification is O — morally offensive. The MPAA rating is PG-13.

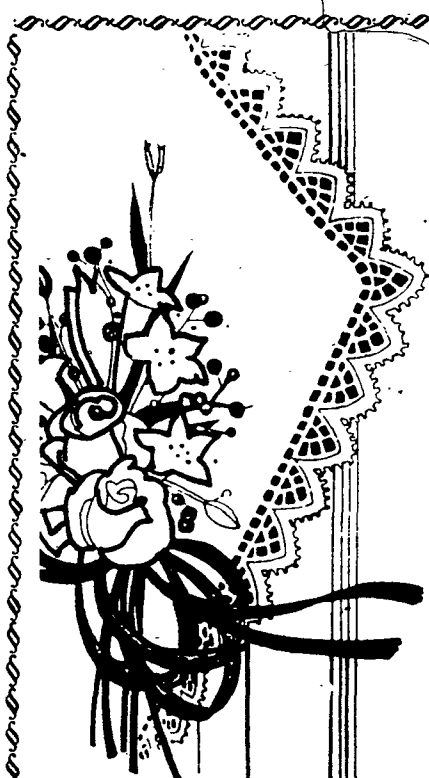
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